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Super-Spy Out Of The Ranks

SINCE the inherent secrecy of the Central Intelligence Agency prevents us from knowing what its director is supposed to do, we have no way of knowing whether Adm. William F. Raborn did it well.

At any rate, after vague rumbles of dissatisfaction in Washington the admiral is out. This is probably due to an inside job, for his know-how was questioned by members of what is called the intelligence community and in Congress.

He is replaced by Richard M. Helms. All the evidence suggests that the replacement is a good one.

Mr. Helms, a former newspaperman and naval intelligence officer, is the first

CIA director to come up through the ranks. A pro, he bears the same relation to the CIA as does J. Edgar Hoover to the FBI. We trust also he will be politically untouchable.

Security intelligence on the scale which the United States is attempting is a new thing for this country, which had no intelligence system worthy of the name until World War II.

Operating in a public vacuum the CIA spends millions of dollars from unnoted budgets on practices which are veiled in mystery.

Sometimes it goofs. But generally it has been in good hands and has received the kind of surveillance from the White House and the Congress which keeps it on the tracks. Mr. Helms' appointment, which in a way may be a response to the CIA's senatorial critics, will tend to keep it rolling.